FILMFAN

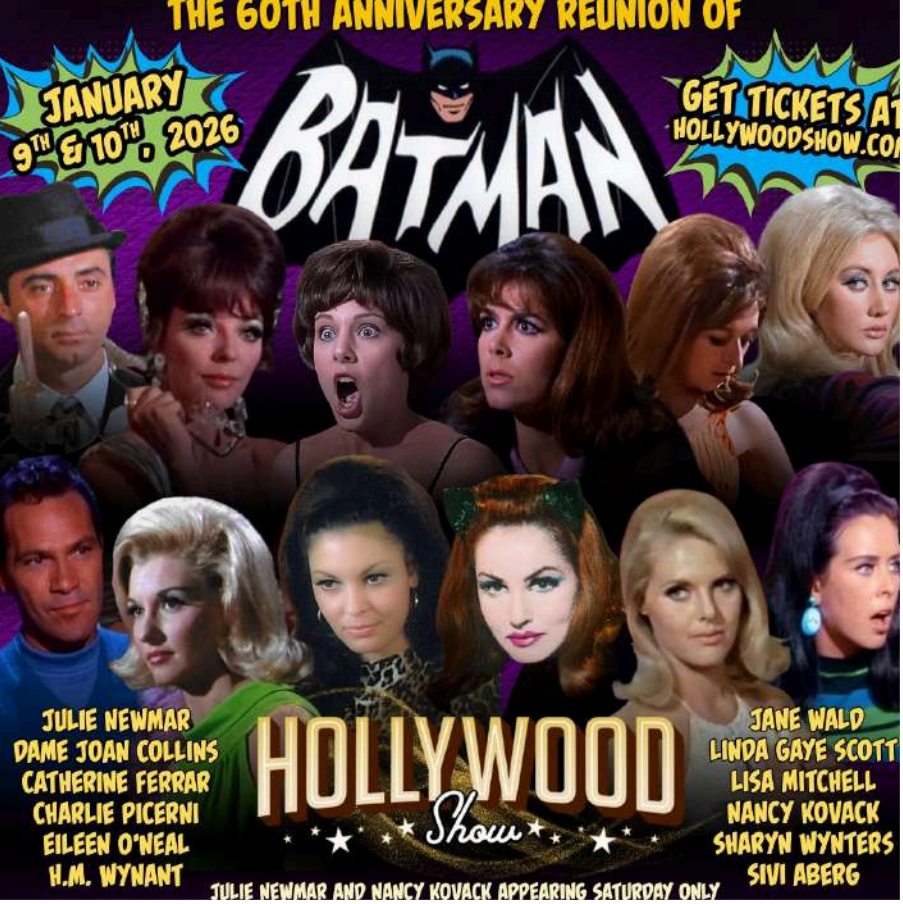
DECEMBER 2025| ISSUE 1

Miss 3-D

Jackie Russell

The French Line (1954)

Joan Blackman



Carly Ferris
Editor-in-Chief

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Nov 9
3:00pm

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FilmFan is dedicated to providing accurate and up-to-date information on the movies, television series, and stars of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. We believe in providing a platform for the voices and names of yesteryear.

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Shirley Tegge

MISS 3-D

By C. Robert Rotter

Shirley Tegge in Bwana Devil (1952)

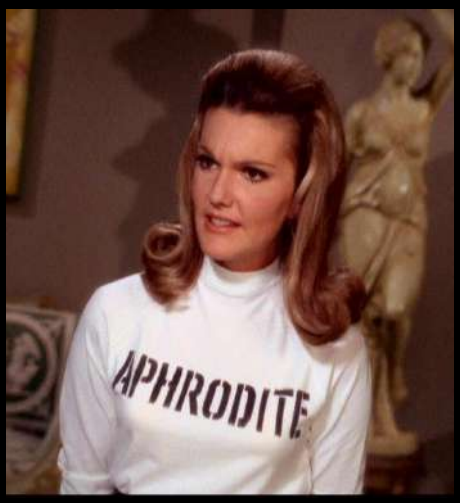
Shirlety Tegge as Miss U.S.A of 1949

We're approaching the 75th anniversary of the implementation of 3-D in the movies. It's the perfect opportunity to pay homage to the original spokesmodel of the 3-D movies. She is Shirley Tegge, a blonde who stood at 5'6" with measurements of 35-24-35 and similarities to Marilyn Monroe, Joi Lansing, and Betty Grable. It begs the question why she never achieved the same success as them, and I can say after watching an interview that she did with Bob Warren in 1960 that it was her incredibly husky and somewhat bland voice. She had moderate success doing pinups in magazines like Vogue and Esquire with appearances in movies like Jolson Sings Again (1949), The Las Vegas Story (1952), and April in Paris (1952). I first saw her in The French Line (1954) where she's seen descending the staircase before Jane Russell sings 'Any Gal' and found her interesting because she didn't have the childhood of a traditional budding starlet. She wasn't the glamorous blonde that the tabloids depicted her, but rather a savvy outdoorswoman who had immense talents in fishing, photography, and painting with movies and modeling being a mere footnote in her rich and fulfilling life.

Shirlee Ann Tegge was born on August 6, 1926 in Iron River, Michigan and was an avid fisherwoman with hiking and camping being other pastimes of hers. Shirley hadn't thought about being an actress until enrolling at Iron River High School where she was cast in Pride and Prejudice and Letters to Lucerne. She had a teacher named Evelyn Nyren who encouraged her to pursue to professionally, which is exactly what she did and for a few years lived in Chicago, Illinois where she appeared in magazines like Vogue, Esquire, and Cosmopolitan. They often utilized her 'outdoorswoman' persona in her photographs, something that Ken Murray didn't do when he cast her in Blackouts of 1948 as one of his showgirls onstage. Shirley didn't think she'd get farther than that, but on March 28, 1949 she was crowned Miss U.S.A at the Shrine Auditorium which led to what Shirley described as "an interesting modeling and acting career. It's important to note that this wasn't the same Miss U.S.A that began in 1952 and still continues through 2025. This was a lesser-known pageant, but it won her a contract with John Robert Powers and several appearances on The Buster Keaton Show.

She was crowned Miss 3-Dimension, a gag title given to her by Arch Oboler Productions to publicize Bwana Devil (1952). It was the first wide-release three-dimensional film and Shirley was in the prologue, but sadly not at the premiere because she had a modeling job in New York that day. She made history by being the original spokesmodel of 3-D movies. Racket Squad, The Cisco Kid, and I Love Lucy were among her television appearances that decade before a starring role in the low-budget Half Way to Hell (1960). She didn't do a lot of acting afterwards, but rather took an interest behind the camera directing commercials while teaching painting in Simi Valley, California. She even had an exhibit of her artwork at the Simi Valley Public Library. Shirley died on June 12, 2010 in Simi Valley, California, and is survived by her daughter Jesse Lindell who's also an actress.

Obituaries



Yvonne Arnett

1937-2019

Yvonne Flint was a popular model who was crowned Queen of the Tournament of Roses in 1956 before marrying footballer Jon Arnett. She's known by television audiences for her appearance on Batman with Adam West. She died in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Judi Blacque

1920-2009

Ship Ahoy (1942), Zeigfeld Follies (1945), and Easy to Love (1946) were among the movies that Judi Alice Black appeared in. She never achieved stardom but was in the chrosu of numerous movies. She was predeceased by her husband Arthur Witty.

Jo Collins

1945-2010

Janet L. Canoy was her name, but she changed it to Jo Collins after her friend Patsy Jo Collins. She was born on August 5, 1945 and lived in Oregon as a teenager where she attended Roseburg High School and later North Eugene High School. Playmate of the Year in 1965 led to a respectable career in movies like Ski Party (1965) and Fireball 500 (1966) before marrying Bo Belinsky of the Pittsburgh Pirates. She is survived by her daughter.

Lynne Forrester

1926-2022

Lynne Forrester was an actress, singer, and dancer who was born in Des Moines, Iowa. She graduating from Roosevelt High School with the nickname 'Peaches' and studied at the University of Colorado, Grinnell College, and Iowa State College with plans to be an educator. Lynne made her television debut on Musical Comedy Time and had walk-on roles in The French Line (1954), Son of Sinbad (1955), and On the Waterfront (1956). She appeaed on episodes of The Perry Como Show, The Arlene Francis Show, Schlitz Playhouse, and We the People. It was while at the height of her career that she met Ernst Maerzendorfer, the renowned conductor, while touring in Europe. They were married in 1962 and remained married until his death.

Tony Maxwell

1952-2025

Anthony Maxwell and his brother Lester were ‘child’ actors onstage and onscreen throught the 1950s and 1960s. Tony appeared in movies like Dime with a Halo (1963) and The Devil at 4 O'Clock (1961) with Barbara Luna before his family -and therefore him- left Hollywood after purchasing a house in the suburbs. He lived in Chico, California for decades where he struggled with substance abuse and incarceration. He is survived by his daughter.

Blanche Taylor

1921-2009

Blanche Winifred Taylor appeared in Road to Utopia (1945), Beauty on Parade (1950), Operation Pacific (1951), and Call Me Mister (1951). She flew to Hollywood after graduating from Manual Arts High School and became a prolific showgirl in the movies. She was predeceased by her husband Angelo Romano.

Jimmy Thompson

1923-2015

James Delaney Thompson didn't achieve the success of Gene Kelley or Fred Astaire, but he became iconic after singing 'Beautiful Girl' in Singin' in the Rain (1952). He enlisted i in the military and his career cooled afterwards. He is survived by his granddaughter Angel Denise Thompson.

CRITERION
[SALE]

08 NOV | 07 DEC

Jackie Russell

INTERVIEW

By Samuel Claesson

Jackie Russell had a career that spanned for several decades with roles in Secrets of Beauty (1951), Tickle Me (1965), Seconds (1966), Airport (1970), and The Devil and Max Devlin (1981). She was born as Jacqueline Ruth Goldberg in Wichita, Kansas to a photographer named John 'Jack' Goldberg and an aspiring actress who'd later use the name Marlyn Gladstone. She did a lot of work as a child, but went on hiatus until finishing her studies at Hollywood High School and later Los Angeles City College. She had a prolific career that included hundreds of television episodes on Death Valley Days, Hawaiian Eye, Bachelor Father, Dante, and 77 Sunset Strip among others. Jackie Russell is 89 years old and lives in Alvin, Texas with her daughter Laura. We appreciate her doing this one-hour interview with us via telephone.

Q: How did you get into the movies?
A: My mother and I left Wichita for Hollywood when I was two years old because she wanted to be an actress. She never really became one though. She was more of a showgirl and wasn't a good actress. I took ballet when I was young and my mother really wanted me to succeed. Her then-husband Sam [Armstrong] became my agent and helped me get in my first movie The Unfinished Dance (1947) with Margaret O'Brien. I went through three auditions to get a background role and was one of 30 cast out of 2,000 children.

Q: How did you get the surname 'Russell'?
A: I was living with my aunt in San Rafael, California and her last name was Russell. I remember her saying "we can't send her to school with the name Goldberg". It carried into my acting career because a lot of the executives in Hollywood weren't friendly to Jewish starlets, which was odd because some of them were Jewish themselves.

Q: Any stories about A Guide for the Married Man (1967)?
A: I did that with Gene Kelly. He and I stayed good friends for years. I remember wearing a skirt and trying to keep my legs covered because I had muscular legs from taking ballet lessons. Gene told me to raise by skirt a bit. I mentioned that my legs were't skinny and he said "I happen to like dancers' legs".

Q: How were you cast in All the Loving Couples (1969)?
A: That was probably my most provocative movie. My agent got me an interview, but I'm sure it helped that the director knew my ex-husband. I auditioned with my natural red hair, and after I got the job the director asked me if I could go blonde. I said "sure" and dyed it a few days later. I had no idea I'd be doing a topless scene and I was so uncomfortable… I requested that as many people leave the stage as possible before filming that particular scene.

Jackie Russell and John Derek on an episode of Frontier Circus - January 18, 1962

Q: What was it like working with Henry Fonda on The Cheyenne Social Club (1970)?
A: He was wonderful. I was a huge fan of Jane Fonda, so I couldn't wait to ask him about his daughter. I said "you must be so proud of her", but he just shrugged his shoulders and said "I guess so". I think he wasn't happy about his daughter's activism at the time.

Q: You were married to Ralph Winters?
A: Yes. He worked at CBS and other places doing the casting. We met on the set of Death Valley Days where I had a guest-starring role. He had just divorced actress Penny Edwards. It wasn't a good marriage. He didn't want me working and even asked me what I expected to get out of a career as an actress. I told him that I just liked doing it.

Q: Did he help you get any roles?
A: Just Wagon Train, but my character was cut down to nothing. We had an agreement that we'd keep our careers separate, but I was so right for that role because I was pregnant and the character was pregnant. Some of the actors on set thought I stuffed by shirt. They were surprised when I told them I was actually pregnant.

Q: Was there ever a role that you wanted, but didn't get?
A: I was considered for the role of Ellen Wedloe in Gentle Ben. It was a television series in the 1960s. I really wanted it because I was going through a divorce and this would've been a good change in my life. I wasn't cast though. The director told me that I was too young and that my children would be a distraction.

Q: What roles were you particularly fond of? Anything you didn't like.
A: I loved doing Jaws (1975). I did voiceover work in it and I still get residuals. Stephen Spielberg liked me a lot. It really made me feel like I was good at what I was doing because I knew I was getting hired for my talent rather than my looks. I'd say Bonanza wasn't fun for me. I had just given birth and I was heavy-ish.

Jackie Russell and Gerald Mohr on an episode of Bonanza - 1960

Q: There's been a lot of controversy regarding The #MeToo Movement and the mistreatment of women in Hollywood. Was anyone ever inappropriate towards you?
A: Yes, but I won't tell you their names. I remember telling my agent [Sam Armstrong] that "I'm having problems with these men" and he told me to just laugh or mention my children if I ever got propositioned. It worked.

Q: Why did you quit acting?
A: It was difficult after my divorce to continue finding roles when I had children to care for. My ex-husband got concerned about money and said after the divorce "are you gonna take my Cadillac too?" I realized that I needed something consistent, so I started working at the Geological Institute of America. Acting jobs are hard to come by as you get older. My son did a bit of film work though. His name is Robert Winters and he was in Xanadu (1980) with Gene Kelly.

Joan Blackman
INTERVIEW

By Samuel Claesson

Joan Blackman was an actress who I would categorize as being between a 'star' and a 'starlet', with movies included The Great Impostor (1961), Twilight of Honor (1963), and Daring Game (1968) in addition to two movies with Elvis Presley giving her a diverse and respectable body of work in the movies. She left her hometown in 1956 and just days after her arrival in Hollywood - at the age of eighteen- got an agent and a contract, accomplishing more at that age than most do in a lifetime. Joan was gorgeous and talented, but her co-stars say that her authenticity, personality, and charisma is what attracted them to her. She worked in Hollywood, but she certainly wasn't Hollywood. Joan Blackman lives in Calistoga, California where she's finished her memoirs and hopes to publish them. She at 87 years old can still sing and gets mail from audiences around the world.

Q: How did you get started in the movies?
A: I started singing as a teenager and before I knew it I was headlining at nightclubs in San Francisco. I believe I got to Hollywood in December of '56 and rented a room at the Hollywood Studio Club… across the hall was Barbara Eden who I knew because we both performed in the nightclub circuit in the Bay Area. I can't say I enjoyed it there. My roommate had the room to herself for months before I showed up and she made it clear that she didn't like sharing it. Louis Shurr offered to be my agent and either he or someone working for him introduced me to a man named Max Arno who managed Hecht-Hill-Lancaster, a movie studio founded by Burt Lancaster. They had just inked a deal with United Artists and were signing woman like myself to be groomed for stardom. That's when I started doing movies.

Q: You're remembered by filmgoers in Blue Hawaii (1961) where you co-starred with Elvis Presley. How did you get cast?
A: I couldn't believe it when I got the part in Blue Hawaii (1961). The studio tried to get Juliet Prowse who was a bigger name, but she wanted too much money. I was at the Paramount commissary having lunch when Hal Wallis saw me and asked me to read for the part. He had cast me in Career (1959) a couple of years prior so he knew my work.

Q: What was Elvis Presley like?
A: Elvis and I had so much fun and had a sort of 'on again off again' relationship. We even worked together in Kid Galahad (1962) the following year. I stayed in touch with Elvis for years. I have a funny story about him… I had dinner with him, his wife, and some friends of his and out of nowhere he starts singing Blue Hawaii to me. You could see his wife [Priscilla Presley] wasn't happy about it.

Q: I read that you dated Frank Sinatra too?
A: Yes but it was more of a friendship. We had our first public outing at the premiere of Anastasia (1956) where he introduced me to reporters as 'Ezzard Charles', who's actually a champion boxer. I'll save the story behind that for my book. I don't know how far our relationship would've gone because I married Joby Baker a couple of years later. Frank and I stayed close though.

Q: Do you regret not marrying him?
A: Not particularly, but he seemed to have regrets. I remember being at his house helping him move boxes and he starts telling me -not in so many words- that he regretted marrying Mia Farrow and only did it because she kept pressuring him to.

Q: You were on an episode of I Spy with Bill Cosby. Did you like him?
A: Oh absolutely. We were very good friends after that. I still remember having him over and him playing with my kids in the living room. He was a sweet man.

Q: Do you think the allegations are true? Would you still speak with him?
A: They probably are. I don't think men like that thought it was necessarily a terrible thing to do in those days. It's sad and unfortunate. I'd love to talk to him though, but I don't know how I'd get ahold of him. If you ever meet him, give him my number.

Q: Was there ever a role in the movies that you pursued, but didn't get? How about a role that you were offered, but rejected?
A: I was considered for the role of Maria in West Side Story (1961) which went to Natalie Wood. I read for that twice and really thought I was gonna get it. I was never told why I wasn't cast, but I assume they wanted someone more established for the part. There's this other film that I was supposed to star in. It was called The Rabbit Trap (1959) and I was cast days after I signed my contract with Hecht-Hill-Lancaster. We were supposed to film in '57 but there were production delays and the project was taken over by another studio, hence why I wasn't in it.

Q: What do you consider to be your greatest film
A: Career (1959) with Dean Martin. He and Jerry Lewis had gone their separate ways and he wanted to do more dramatic work. We got great reviews for that… most of the fan mail I get is for the Elvis movies though. I get quite a bit of fan mail from Japan for Visit to a Small Planet (1960) with ironically starred Jerry [Lewis]. I guess it has a following there.

Q: Your last film was Moonrunners (1975). Why did you stop working?
A: I didn't like being in Hollywood. The women were catty. I didn't like the crowds either. I'm more of a solitary person these days. Even if I wanted to return it'd be difficult as I don't fly and I'm not keen on a seven-hour drive. I live an hour from San Francisco in this tiny town and I love it here. A few people have even recognized me despite my hair being grey, which flattered me.

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Crystal White

DANCER, ACTRESS, AND MOTHER

By Leon Gaer and Melanie Price

Crystal White had a duo act with her mother Audrey Wilson (nee White) who trained her to become a multitalented entertainer, and upon graduating from Hollywood High School joined her mother in a vaudevillian act. Eileen used the surname 'White' and became Crystal White while her mother became Priscilla White. They were billed as 'The White Sisters' despite not being sisters. Their identical appearances led audiences to believe they were twins, which they took advantage of in their act. Their secret was revealed in court after their sued somebody, but it didn't inhibit their career. They continued doing nightclubs in New York until they got offers to be in the movies and went their separate ways.

While they had earned a lot of money during their duo act, it had been spent on silks, furs, and elaborate costumes to support their act that was now done, so Crystal needed to work. She found modest success in Hollywood where she appeared in movies like Tangier (1946) where she acted as a stand-in for Maria Montez in addition to having a walk-on role and The Fighting Kentuckian (1949) as a townswoman who was frequently seen but never heard. She was supposed to have a larger role, but changes in the script left her without dialogue. The Band Wagon (1953) put her in the chorus as did Road to Bali (1953) where she left such an impression on Bing Crosby that he made her spaghetti at his mansion. Crystal told her daughter-in-law Melanie that between rehearsals for April in Paris (1952), Doris Day would sit with the dancers and chat. Priscilla White was in a few movies too until a severe accident during filming left her unable to work as a dancer thus ending her career.

Crystal White [Right] in *The Fighting Kentuckian* (1949)

Crystal White [Center] with Camille Williams and Jean Harrison in *She's Working Her Way Through College* (1953)

Ken Murray's Blackouts of 1948 was a good gig for Crystal, particularly because she met a man named Murray Gaer who'd be the love of her life. He worked in the production as a musician, and dated Crystal for years until they were wed on December 6, 1952 in Los Angeles, California. They had a son named Leon and settled in Woodland Hills, California where Crystal intended to retire. It didn't last though and her love of the arts took her to regional theater as a performer and choreographer. She did a lot of stage productions throughout the 1960s and 1970s with Another Life at the Bethel Lutheran Church in Encino, California being her most successful, and by the 1990s was Vice President of the Professional Dancers Society.

You'd think that it couldn't get better than that, but it did when 78-year-old Crystal White was volunteering at the Encino Community Center and an agent walked in to recruit elderly dancers for Mystery Men (1999) starring Ben Stiller. You could describe it as a resurgence for her and proof that age didn't inhibit her from doing what she loved. She could've kept going if not for an accident that left her unable to walk, so she retired to Australia where she lived until her death on November 28, 2013.

Crystal White [Right] and Will Rogers Jr. in *The Story of Will Rogers* (1952)

[Left to Right] Mary Langan, Gloria Pall, Lonnie Pierce, Bobette Bentley, Sally McCloskey, Judy Landon, Gloria Watson, Gilbert Roland, Sue Casey, Dawn Oney, Lucille La Marr, Dede Moore, Nancy Kilgas, and Shirley Patterson in *The French Line* (1954)

'WITH A KISS' *The French Line (1954)*

By Giseld Dervishi

The French Line (1954) remains the most scandalous musical of the 1950s, so much so that it didn't get the Seal of Approval' by the Motion Picture Association until its re-release when various scenes were censored. I watched it because my aunt was in it, and I couldn't believe the hundred or so showgirls that Howard Hughes cast alongside Jane Russell and Joyce MacKenzie. I loved the various songs in the film, but especially liked Gilbert Roland's 'With a Kiss' segment where he sings to the showgirls as they twirl and ogle the handsome actor. I found a photograph of the women who are standing around him, but none of them received onscreen credit or were even notated in the photograph. It's ashame as it took a year to identify them, and I found that they had lives outside of The French Line (1954) that were more interesting than anything they did onscreen.

Mary Langan

Mary Catherine Langan was crowned Miss Hollywood in 1950 before founding Deming-Langan Enterprises, a modeling institution where she and her colleague Millicent Deming taught aspiring models charm, posture, and wardrobe. She had previously done modeling with agencies like John Robert Powers and Lola Whitehead before realizing that she knew a lot about the industry and could represent herself. Howard Hughes reached out to her agency asking for models to appear in The French Line (1954) and Son of Sinbad (1955), to which Mary gladly recommended herself. They eventually closed the agency and Mary Langan managed a salon until her death on June 7, 2008 at the age of 79.

Gloria Pall

Gloria Pall was a 5'9" curvaceous blonde who was cast in The French Line (1954) because she dated Howard Hughes. She was known for her escapades, candidness, and pinups than her acting, but it's not to say that she wasn't a good actress because she was a good actress and an even better storyteller who wrote several books about her experiences in Hollywood. She was born on July 15, 1927 in New York to John and Pauline Pallatz and as a teenager worked as a filer at the United Service Organization before winning titles like Miss Flatbush and Miss Earl Carroll. It led to a successful modeling career which in turn led to a career onscreen in movies like 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea (1954) and The Brothers Karamazov (1958).

I heard a couple of good stories from Sylvia Lewis, who co-starred with her on Where's Raymond? Sylvia remembers Gloria as being outspoken and once even announced at a luncheon that she was getting an abortion that afternoon. She described Gloria as somebody who loved being around celebrities more than acting itself. They reconnected at Ray Bolger's funeral in the 1980s where Gloria said "can you believe all the stars that are here?" Perhaps that's why Gloria Pall never achieved the status of Marilyn Monroe despite ample publicity. Gloria Pall like most starlets became a realtor and used the slogan "Call Pall" in her advertisements. She refused to leave the limelight though and continued appearing at lavish galas, reunions, and conventions until her health deteriorated and she was admitted to Saint Joseph Medical Center. It was while there that she told visiting friends that "this isn't the real me" and that her spirit was much more and would be freed from her body in the afterlife. She died says later on December 30, 2012 at the age of 85.I watched her funeral on YouTube which was filled with great stories about the once-glamorous starlet. I recommend watching it.

Lonnie Pierce

Yolanda 'Lonnie' Diane Baiano is among the last surviving actresses who appeared in The French Line (1954) along with Kim Novak, Jean Moorhead, Charmienne Harker, and Joyce Johnson. She was born on June 23, 1927 and got into the industry because her father Solly Baiano worked at Warner Bros and her mother Charlotte Pierce was a 1920s-era actress. They helped Lonnie get a contract at the studio and she proceeded to appear in movies like The Doughgirls (1944), Anchors Aweigh (1945), My Wild Irish Rose (1947), Adventures of Don Juan (1948), Neptune's Daughter (1949), and Mister Roberts (1955). She wasn't a trained actress, but she had experience in the theater as a pianist while at University High School. Her brother Michael Baiano was an actor too who made headlines after marrying singer Jaye P. Morgan.

She had a walk-on role in That Hagen Girl (1947), but it left an impression on her co-star Shirley Temple who told a reporter that "maybe someone will discover her [Lonnie] as future star material." It was good publicity, as was her winning pageants like Miss Cleopatra and Queen of the National Peanut Week where the sponsors awarded a role in The Daughter of Rosie O'Grady (1950). She married screenwriter Vincent Fotre -who had gone steady with Ann Miller for years- on the condition that they don't have children immediately so she could focus on her career, which is when she got a plum role in The Jazz Singer (1952). It was supposed to be a 'plum role' but changes in the script reduced it to a mere walk-on. She reported to Howard Hughes a year later who cast her in The French Line (1954) where she's heard saying "au revoir" as Gilbert Roland approaches her singing 'With a Kiss'.

Lonnie took a hiatus from acting after her daughter Kerry was born and between motherhood guest-starred on episodes of Burke's Law and Honey West. I watched an episode of the latter television series where she portrayed a blonde watching a hypnotist with her husband by her side. She was in her 40s on that episode,

but you'd never know it because she seemed more glamorous than when she was a starlet at Warner Bros a decade prior. It was her last onscreen appearance, but she did remain in Hollywood competing in tennis tournaments alongside stars of yesteryear. I spent years searching for Lonnie and found her a year ago accidentally when Xav d'Hier gave me a photograph of a woman named Lennie Forte, and lo and behold it was the same woman. Lonnie Pierce is now Yolanda McKee and is living in Laguna Niguel, California, but unfortunately isn't able to do interviews.

Gloria Watson

Gloria Ann Watson was born on September 9, 1930 in Los Angeles, California and while studying at the University of California, Los Angeles did a bit of modeling to pay her tuition. She competed in the Los Angeles Home Show and although she didn't win she was cast in both Son of Sinbad (1955) and The French Line (1954). Gloria opted not to do another film and instead worked at Disneyland and became the first 'showgirl' to perform at the resort. She died on October 30, 2015. I wanna note that she's not to be confused with Gloria Watson who appeared in Taxi 13 (1928) and Barnyard Follies (1940).

Nancy Kilgas

I couldn't believe that the blonde saying "a l'amour" to Gilbert Roland in The French Line (1954) was 5'5" blonde Nancy Kilgas because she was too talented for such a role. She had starred in movies like Seven Brides for Seven Brothers (1954) and Funny Face (1957) where she demonstrated immense expertise as a ballerina while being a credible actress. It's no surprise because she began studying her craft as a child in Portland, Oregon. She was born on November 7, 1930 in Seattle, Washington and got involved in the arts as a columnist

[Left to Right] Sally McCloskey, Gloria Watson, Dawn Oney, Gilbert Roland, and Jane Russell in *The French Line* (1954)

with the Young Oregonian Reporters' where she penned articles in The Oregonian about the theater. She herself took an interest in the arts and began appearing in stage productions like The Three Wishes and Sleeping Beauty at Grant High School where upon graduating enrolled at Portland State University.

Nancy Kilgas got into the movies accidentally while she was vacationing in Hollywood with her parents. She met a couple of ballerinas and shared a room with them so she could get work in the area, with one of them helping her get her first gig on The Dinah Shore Show after introducing her to Dinah Shore's secretary. She again got discovered at The Mocambo by a filmmaker named Joe Pasternak tried getting her a contract with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. They didn't feel she was ready though and told her to return in a year for an audition. She spent a year appearing in movies like Hans Christian Andersen (1952) before getting cast in Seven Brides for Seven Brothers (1954) as one of the brides. It was a performance where Amanda Potter of The Free Lance-Star described her as "a bad actress… among the worst of the fake criers". It didn't seem to matter to the studio though as they cast her in Athena (1954) and a few other film before deciding not to renew her contract.

I saw that The Spider (1958) and Curse of the Undead (1959) were some of her movies she did after leaving Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. It was a pivot to do low-budget horror films after being in star-studded musicals. I don't think Nancy cared though because if anything it gave her an opportunity to showcase her abilities as an actress rather than a ballerina. Man of a Thousand Faces (1957) was a highlight of her career as she's in a memorable scene where she removes the mask of the phantom which reveals his disfigurement. She took a hiatus from on-camera acting to star in Copellia at The Greek Theater where a columnist said that she "does not yet have the command of ballet" but "gives every promise of becoming a top ranking dancer". Her last film was Torn Curtain (1966) directed by Alfred Hitchcock, and she spent the remainder of her working years as a realtor with Pierson Realty in Pacific Palisades, California. She died on October 28, 2022. She had been a recluse with co-stars like Ruta Lee and Barrie Chase saying that they hadn't heard from her in decades.

Shirley Patterson

I'm surprised that Shirley Gladys Patterson (sometimes known as Shawn Smith) wasn't given onscreen credit in The French Line (1954) because she had a lot of dialogue when conversing with Jane Russell. She was at the height of her career in the 1940s starring in Batman (1943) and Riding West (1944) but had been reduced to walk-on roles in the 1950s. She was born on December 26, 1922 in Winnipeg, Canada and planned to become an archer. It wasn't until flying to Los Angeles, California to care for her ailing father that she started doing walk-on roles in movies at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer before getting more substantial roles with the help of Katharine Hepburn who believed that Shirley had a lot of potential.

Shirley Patterson in her words quit acting in lieu of matrimony -she wed Alfred Smith Jr and had a son named Tory- only to return after Edmund Grainger of RKO Studios told her that he wanted to put her in The French Line (1954) and suggested it as a comeback for the 30-year-old blonde. That's how she got cast. She did a few movies with the studio until an accident while skiing abruptly ended her career. She died on April 4, 1995 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida at the age of 72 with her last public appearance having been at the Western Film Fair in Charlotte, North Carolina in 1986.

Bobette Bentley

Bobette Bentley had an innocence about her that made her ideal as a 'student' or 'sweetheart' in the movies, and while not as glamorous as her colleagues she was determined and didn't let being a wife and mother prevent her from succeeding. She was born on June 16, 1933 in Los Angeles, California and began acting at the age of three in regional theater. She made her onscreen debut at the age of six in The Courageous Dr. Christian (1940) before realizing that acting was secondary to education, and she took a hiatus to focus on her studies and actually experience a childhood that most 'child actors' don't. It wasn't the last filmgoers saw of her though because in 1952 after being crowned Maid of Cotton she got numerous roles in movies like Princess of the Nile (1954) and The Last Hurrah (1958). She wanted to expand her horizons beyond a 'showgirl' so

she enrolled at the Anthony Quinn Acting Group to perfect her craft.

It's ironic that Bobette portrayed co-eds and students onscreen because she was a co-ed herself at the University of Southern California where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in 1954. She once said to her mother that she "can't be satisfied with getting a B when I know I can work for an A." She knew what her priorities were and didn't fool herself about how far she could go as an entertainer. Bobette started doing more television work because it gave her the freedom that the movies didn't to see her daughters more, but she did get cast in Howard Hughes movies' Son of Sinbad (1955) where she's aiming an arrow at Dale Robertson as he enters the hideaway and the aforementioned The French Line (1954). 1962 was when she quit the business, and with a hundred or so movies and television episodes on her resume she had no regrets. She worked as a realtor with Coldwell Banker Realty in Malibu, California until her death on March 21, 2020. I attempted to contact her daughters but was stopped by an intermediary who threatened to report me to the authorities. I guess he doesn't know the meaning of "Freedom of the Press".

Judy Landon

You can see Judith 'Judy' Brenna Landon (sometimes known as Judith Landon Swaab and Judith Levine) biting on a rose and imitating a bull in The French Line (1954). It's one of the more memorable walk-on roles in the film, but she -like Nancy Kilgas and Sue Casey- was worthy of more. She starred in Prehistoric Women (1950) a few years prior which brought her fame among filmgoers before walk-on roles in Royal Wedding (1951), The Merry Widow (1952), Second Chance (1953), and White Christmas (1954) made her fade into obscurity. She was born on February 26, 1928 in Chicago, Illinois to Bert and Ida Levine, who enrolled her in ballet lessons. She didn't think about doing it professionally until 1941 when she did an act at the Beverly- Wilshire Hotel which impressed audiences and got her steady work throughout the 1940s in stage productions like The Fortune Teller at the Los Angeles Civic Light Opera Association and Magdalena at the Ziegfeld Theatre.

Judy Landon loved the theater but wanted to work onscreen, so she rented a house in Beverly Hills, California so she could audition at nearby studios. I couldn't and still don't believe her story about how she actually got cast in her first film. She told a reporter that she was horseback riding when she saw an injured chipmunk near the path and took it to a veterinarian. The veterinarian referred her to a filmmaker who needed an actress who could handle wild animals. That's how she says she got started even though most of her movies with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer didn't involve animals, such as Singin' in the Rain (1952) where she walks the red carpet, Road to Bali (1953) as the last of the handmaidens to disappear in a cloud before women draped in gold appear, and Gentlemen Prefer Blondes (1953) as one of the women surrounding Marilyn Monroe who sings 'Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend'

Her marriage to Brian Keith of Family Affair -whom she had met at Paramount Pictures- put an abrupt end to her career, although she did appear in a few episodes with him. They divorced and she remarried, attending events with the now-defunct Professional Dancers' Society and even starting her own studio. Judith Landon-Holden died on October 31, 2021 at the age of 93 and is survived by several children and grandchildren. I was saddened to find that there wasn't much of an obituary commemorating her legacy, so I'm glad we're doing that now.

Sue Casey

Suzanne 'Sue' Marguerite Philips really deserves her own article because she had a prolific career that spanned several decades which The Beach Girls and the Monster (1965) being her greatest onscreen role. It was a low-budget horror flick that was a departure from her previous work in The Secret Life of Walter Mitty (1947), Show Boat (1951), The French Line (1954), The Girl Rush (1955), and Bells Are Ringing (1960) where she was glamorous and standing alongside a greater caliber of entertainers. The Beach Girls and the Monster (1965) was so awful that she later told Tom Lisanti in an interview that she was "very surprised that this film has such a following because it is just awful". I agree with her, but her performance was outstanding and proved that she was worthy of more than the chorus.

Sue Casey was born on April 8, 1926 and upon graduating from Fairfax High School entertained troops overseas. She fell in love with a soldier there named Howard Casey. They were wed a few weeks later and had a daughter before divorcing. He abandoned the family and left Sue to care for their daughter alone, so she worked various jobs to pay the bills like modeling which led to movies. She was hired at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer to be one of their 'Goldwyn Girls' at $150 a week which guaranteed work in musicals. They promised her a buildup and a long-term contract, but she left the studio to marry a struggling actor named Paul Hoffman. Sue announced her retirement to reporters and said that the newlyweds planned to live in Detroit, Michigan. That didn't last as Sue became restless and wanted to work. They divorced and Sue quickly got work with Jerry Fairbanks Productions who filmed commercials.

The Flame and the Arrow (1950) was her first post-divorce role, and an interesting note is that Burt Lancaster urged her to dye her hair because there was a shortage of redheads in Hollywood. Sue stayed a redhead the remainder of her career, but it didn't seem to get her the larger roles that she waned. The Dungeon and Uncle Charley's Flying Saucer were some of the movies she was supposed to star in, but production was cancelled. She did a few screen tests with studios that didn't go well as producers found that she wasn't as attractive onscreen as she was in person. This sentiment was echoed by her co-star in Road to Bali (1952), Sylvia Lewis, who told me that Sue "had a natural beauty that never seemed to resonate onscreen like it did in person". She remembered riding in a taxi with Sue -who wasn't wearing makeup- and the sunlight shining on her face was breathtaking.

Sue Casey spent her later years working at a realtor at Jon Douglas Company while continuing appear in movies. She was even crowned Ms. Senior Los Angeles on November 22, 1992 in a pageant she entered at the urging of her former classmate Jeff. She was cast in American Beauty (1999) but discovered while watching it that she wasn't in it, complaining to a reporter that she "brought my son to the premiere and felt so foolish when I realized they deleted our scene". That was the end of Sue's onscreen career. She spent her retirement at the Motion Picture and Television Fund in Woodland Hills, California, giving her last interview on January 25, 2014 with Scott Feinberg where described Samuel Goldwyn as a "not-so-amusing person" and Arthur Freed as "a sweetheart". She died on February 21, 2019 at the age of 92.

Dede Moore

If Betty Grable is 'The Legs' and Vikki Dougan 'The Back, I'd give Martha Diana 'Dede' Moore the title of 'The Cleft' since her jawline made her one of the easier women to identify in The French Line (1954). She was in Howard Hughes' Son of Sinbad (1955) as well where she says "c'mon Sesame" to a mule. She was born on May 26, 1934 Robert and Martha Moore. She hadn't planned on being a starlet, but hoped to pursue the stage. Dede -or Dee- studied William Shakespeare at Occidental College and on a whim posed for photographs with John 'Jack' Freeman in a bikini that were subsequently published in magazines like Eye and catalogs like The Lufkin Line. They proved popular with Howard Hughes, who gave her a contract after the photographs reached his desk.

She was reportedly in Hollywood or Bust (1955) as 'Girl at Mailbox', but I cannot find her in the film. It wasn't the kind of acting she wanted to do though, so she quit and auditioned for the Shakespeare Festival where on July 22, 1955 she starred onstage in Taming of the Shrew, Hamlet, and Measure For Measure. She felt so fulfilled that weekend, proving to audiences that she was more than a pretty face. Dede married George Seabold and in addition to having a daughter founded a bookstore in Van Nuys, California. I spoke with Dede's stepdaughter Christina, whose father [Mario Ambroselli] married Dede shortly before her death. It's a sad story. Dede and Mario were newlyweds who returned from camping when she began feeling ill and collapsed. She was rushed to the hospital where she died of cancer on April 16, 1973 at the age of 38.

Sally McCloskey

Sally McCloskey was a gorgeous redhead who -as a trained ballerina- did several movies, but The French Line (1954) was the sole film where you'd hear her speak. Howard Hughes loved redheads, and clearly Sally was no exception as she acts, sings, and dances while rubbing noses with Gilbert Roland. She was born on April 14, 1935, in Los Angeles and began studying ballet at the age of eight. She joined a troupe known as the Douglas-Ballou Dancers and worked with instructors such as Ruth St. Denis, Vincenzo Celli and Adolph Bolm, names that are only familiar to avid dancers. She got her first starring role in the stage production of Sleeping Beauty at the Shrine Auditorium, and upon graduating from El Segundo High School flew to Las Vegas Nevada where she got a job at the prestigious Sands Hotel as both a ballerina and choreographer. It

was months later that a photographer at the hotel named Don English asked her to do a photoshoot with him at Mount Charleston while a bomb was being detonated miles away. The photographs were iconic as you could see Sally posing with an explosion behind her. It gave her the exposure she needed as the photographs were published in newspapers across the country.

Sally did a few movies like Hans Christian Andersen (1952) at $137.50 a week and Anything Goes (1956) at $157.50 a week, but she preferred doing television work as the hours were flexible. When a reporter asked her about her ambitions, she said "I want to get ahead in the movies, but I know my limitations." She saved $12,000 during her years at Metro-Goldwyn- Mayer by living with her parents and with some good investments was doing well when she got married. I'd love to say more about Sally McCloskey, but she died in 1985 and her sole heir is a daughter named Angela who according to sources lives in a halfway house and unable to speak with us.

Lucille La Marr

I have a lot of admiration for Lucille La Marr who did 'showgirl' roles throughout the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, which not only defied the odds -women over 30 in those days typically could't do chorus work- but gives her the distinction of being the only woman with 'showgirl' work that spanned three decades. She's easily seen in movies like Hollywood Canteen (1944) and Jailhouse Rock (1957) because of her blonde curls and grin that distinguished her from her colleagues. I don't know why she used the surname 'La Marr' because her name was Lucille Edith Knoerr. She was born on September 7, 1916 in Kingfisher, Oklahoma but spent her childhood in Portland, Oregon where she attended Commerce High School and while there became an expert swimmer and ballerina.

She relocated to Tulsa, Oklahoma to live with her father and did chorus work at the Akdar Theater of which he was the manager. If the theater hadn't gone bankrupt, Lucille likely wouldn't have flown to Hollywood for work. That's what she did though and was quickly hired at a nightclub on Sunset Boulevard where she worked evenings. An agent saw her waiting tables and offered her a role in The Big Broadcast of 1936 (1935) with Folies Bergère (1935), College Holiday (1936), and You're a Sweetheart (1937) following. She wasn't getting enough work though, and as a divorcee with a son needed to earn a living. It was with that Lucille and her son went to New York where she got a job at the St. Regis Roof until Warner Bros offered her a contract that gave her a bevy of roles in movies like Old Acquaintance (1943), Mr. Skeffington (1944), The Jolson Story (1946), The Petty Girl (1950), and of course The French Line (1954). She changed her name to Lucille Bryon because she felt that 'La Marr' caused confusion between her and the legendary entertainer Hedy Lamarr.

The 1950s were difficult for Lucille, and as she got fewer offers in Hollywood she went to Las Vegas entertaining at the El Rancho Hotel at $95.20 a week. It's a Mad Mad Mad Mad World (1962) was her last onscreen work where you'll see her doubling for Edie Adams in various scenes. She lived modestly in an apartment on Keystone Avenue doing secretarial work until getting her pension with the Screen Actors Guild. She died on October 4, 2002 at the age of 86, predeceased by her son David.

Janet Lake
Q&A

By Samuel Claesson

Janet Lake was a wonderful actress who began her career as a model before being given a seven- year contract with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer starting at $200 a week. She along with Luana Lee and Judi Jordan were the last 'starlets' of 1950s-era Hollywood before television and changes in the laws changed the landscape of filmmaking. Janet appeared in These Wilder Years (1956), The Opposite Sex (1956), and Raintree County (1957) before delving into television where she achieved a lot more success. She starred in The Tycoon and had appearances on television series like Perry Mason, 77 Sunset Strip, and Hawaiian Eye. Those who don't know her for her television work probably remember her high-profile marriage to actor Robert Dix. Janet lives in Reston, Virginia but still have a legion of dedicated fans around the world.

Q: How were you discovered by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer?
A: I had done modeling for months and made it farther than I ever thought possible. A talent scout with MGM saw my photo on the back of a playbill in New York City. It was as cigarette ad. He spoke with my agent who sent me to the studio for a screen test. I got lucky… some people just get lucky. I had no ambitions of being an actress.

Q: You first appeared in The Fastest Gun Alive (1956)?
A: Yes. That was a lot of fun. The studio put me up in a hotel on Wilshire Blvd in a room next to Louis Calhern and gave me the 5-star treatment. They even sent a limo to pick me up every day until the studio's accountant called me into his office and told me that I'd have to get my own car pretty soon. That's when I realized this wasn't gonna last.

Q: You had a seven-year contract with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Why didn't you stay with them?
A: It was the wrong time to start in the movies because theaters were closing and television was encroaching its enormous head. If I had started a few years earlier I probably could've been a bigger star. That's why I started doing television work because that's where the jobs were.

Q: What can you tell us about The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet?
A: I did a few episodes of that as Ricky's girlfriend. I was supposed to have more of a recurring role, but my agent telephoned me and said "you gotta stop doing these or you'll be stuck doing these kinds of roles". Ozzie [Nelson] spoke with me a few days later asking me to do more episodes and I told him I wasn't interested. He was so disappointed.

Q: Was there ever a role that you pursued, but didn't get? How about a role that you were offered, but rejected?
A: There were a lot of things that I was supposed to do. I remember getting cast in This Could Be the Night (1957), but was dropped with no explanation. There was another film I was asked to do called Legions of the Nile (1960). I wanted to do it but it was being filmed in Europe and I didn't have a passport, so Linda Cristal got the part.

Q: There's been a lot of controversy regarding Bill Cosby and the #MeToo Movement. What's your opinion on it? Was anyone ever inappropriate towards you?
A: It's interesting that you mention Bill [Cosby]. He and my then-husband Pepper Rodgers were good friends and they played tennis together. I can say that in my years as a model and actress, nobody propositioned me. I credit that to being a 'threatening looker'.

Q: Why did you leave Hollywood?
A: I went wherever my husband went, but we still kept in touch with people in the area. We founded a nonprofit where wealthy people pay to play tennis with celebrities, and the money would go to charities. We had some big stars there like Robert Stack and Lucille Ball. I have a good story about that… I remember we had Desi Arnaz Jr as one of the celebrities and we were doing some warm-ups when we see his parents [Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz] walking in with their dogs on a leash. They sit on the benches by the court and Desi slams his racket on the pavement and curses. He wasn't happy to see his parents together there, especially since they had already divorced.

Q: What advice would you give to aspiring actresses?
A: I remember an elderly woman at the studio gave me some advice. She said "I don't recommend it". I'd tell actresses to have a good time. If you're not having a good time, it's not right for you.

Q: Where did the name Janet Lake come from?
A: I was Janet Lenkey until I began modeling at $800 a week. The agency that signed me told me to change it to either Lane or Lake. I chose Lake.

Q: What can you tell us about The Wings of Eagles (1957)?
A: That was a big disappointment. I was supposed to have a lot more scenes, but the consultants on the set objected to love scenes I had with Dan Dailey because I played a WAC and Dailey was a soldier. It was deemed inappropriate for two military officials to have a relationship like that.

Q: You did a few episodes of Hawaiian Eye.
A: Yes… I loved doing the episode Little Miss Rich Witch. There was a scene where I slugged Connie Stevens. It was the first time I was cast against type. MGM tried to turn me into a Gracey Kelly type, but I preferred doing roles like this.

Q: Any other roles you pursued, but didn't get?
A: I was considered for the starring role in Forty Pounds of Trouble (1963), but Suzanne Pleshette got the role. I did several pilots too including for series called Portofino for NBC where a play the owner of a hotel. That would've been career-changing.

Q: You know that filmgoers still remember you, right?
A: I still get a lot of fan mail, but I'm down to three autograph requests a week. I used to sign whatever was sent to me until I saw that people were selling autographed photos of me for $40 online… now I only autograph one photo per fan.

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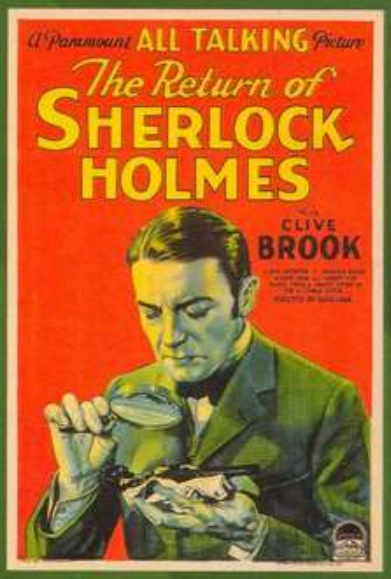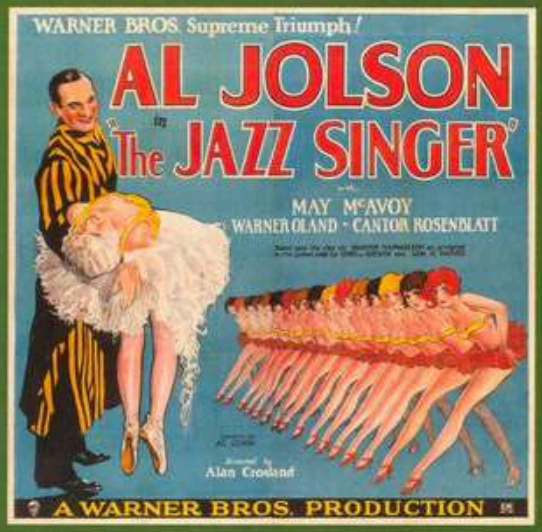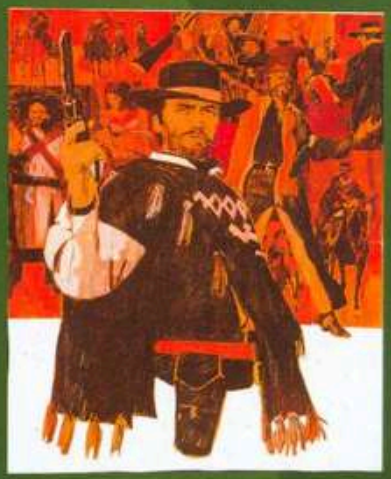
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